

USAID'S HEALTH EVALUATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT (HEARD) PROJECT

Scientific Evaluation of the Psychosocial Impacts of Baby Friendly Spaces in Low-Resource Humanitarian Settings – Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

89%
of refugee adults living in Cox's Bazar camps report depressive symptoms

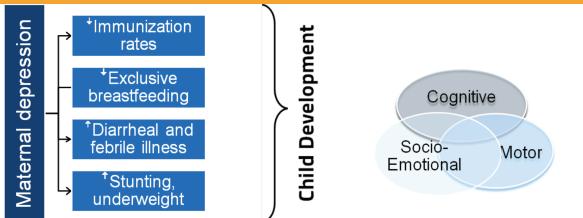
9%
of Rohingya women in Cox's Bazar camps are lactating mothers who benefit from maternal nutrition services

52%
of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar camps are children under 18 years old

4,5%
of children under 5 are admitted with either severe or moderate acute malnutrition in Cox's Bazar camps

RATIONALE

Symptoms of depression during pregnancy or following childbirth are very common worldwide, and even more in humanitarian settings.



During humanitarian emergencies, threats to child health and development are compounded by environmental stressors, such as poverty and exposure to violence, that place children at high risk for cognitive delays, mental health problems, physical illness, and malnutrition.

Caregivers of young children also experience heightened risk of poor mental and physical health that may decrease their ability to buffer the impacts of environmental stressors on their children.

WHERE WE WORK

Since 2017, ACF runs BFS services beside Integrated Nutrition Centres in different settlements within Cox's Bazar sub-district.



THE PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION: BABY FRIENDLY SPACES

The objectives of Baby friendly Spaces are:

- To promote breastfeeding & child care practices;
- To develop and reinforce mother-child bonding;
- To allow mothers and children for quality time;
- Offer activities to support maternal mental health.

WE ADAPTED BFS ACTIVITIES

5 MODULES

1. Psychosocial stimulation integrated in Nutrition,
2. Psychosocial stimulation through baby massage and hygiene,
3. Psychosocial stimulation in Baby play
4. Psychosocial stimulation through breastfeeding
5. Individual MHPSS session



STUDY TIMELINE



IN THE BES CENTER



THE MAIN PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOMES

Distress ($\alpha=0.90$) Myanmar-wide International Depression Symptom Scale (IDSS) & Kessler 6 (14-item)	Functioning ($\alpha=0.81$) WHO Disability Assessment Schedule 2.0 (WHODAS)
Subjective well-being ($\alpha=0.85$) Personal well-being index (PWI) adapted (6-item)	Positive Coping ($\alpha=0.81$) Brief COPE adapted (10-item)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

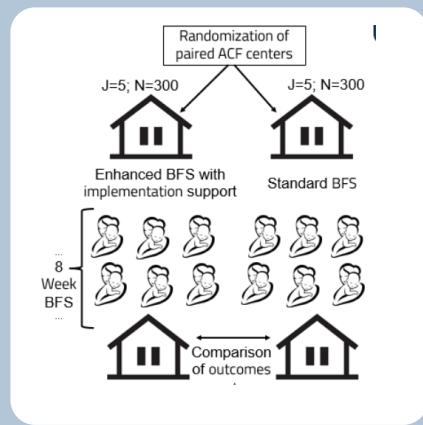
Although psychosocial support programs are implemented worldwide, there is a lack of formal scientific research documenting evidence for their impact on caregivers of young children or providing guidance for their effective implementation. Responding to this gap in knowledge, we aim to:

Evaluate the extent to which Baby Friendly Spaces (BFS) in Nutrition programs contribute to improved maternal and child health outcomes for forcibly displaced lactating Rohingya mothers and their young children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Examine key implementation factors related to these outcomes (e.g., fidelity, sustainability)

Explore what would be needed to adapt this program for delivery to Bangladeshi mothers and their young children seeking services in host community clinics within Cox's Bazar.

STUDY DESIGN: MIXED METHODS



Parallel Implementation Research

Beneficiaries

- 1) reach and effectiveness at the participant level
- 2) "downstream" impacts of the intervention on fathers and families

Organizational Stakeholders

- 3) adoption, implementation, and maintenance at the staff, organization, and policy level

Host community

- 4) Necessary modifications for delivery to host community

RESULTS

600

Rohingya mothers interviewed on their well-being and their children's well-being

1596

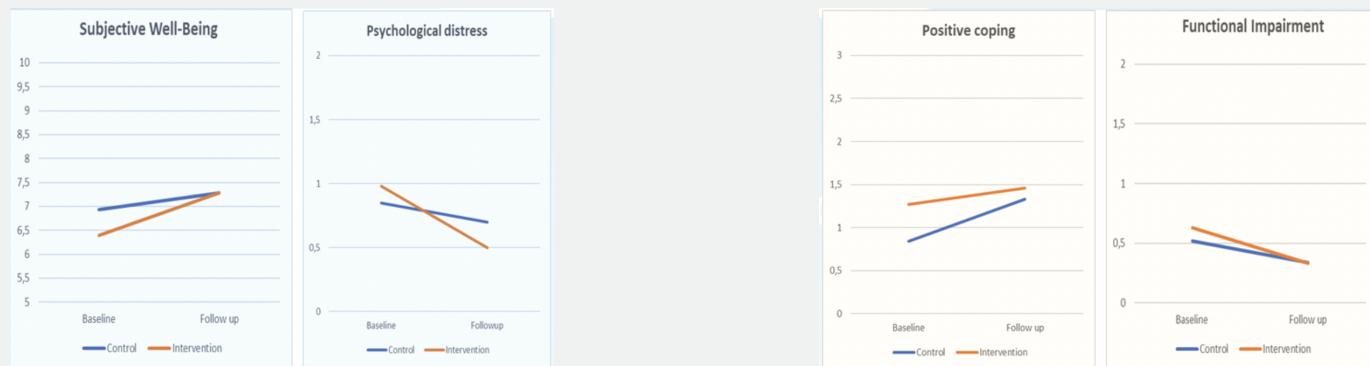
Total service contacts for Rohingya mothers and their malnourished children

73

Rohingya mothers and partners, key informant living in camps, BFS providers were interviewed

50

Key informants living in host communities were interviewed



Our preliminary results indicate that with supervision and implementation support, integration of manualized psychosocial support activities into nutrition services holds potential for reducing distress and improving subjective well-being of conflict affected mothers, but results were weaker for improving functioning and positive coping. Mixed methods implementation findings point to high perceived acceptability and appropriateness.

"We can take good care of our child by learning these good things from here. If our children are happy, then we are happy also. Maybe mothers who face problems that I have shared before come to BFS for mental peace. Apa (the psychosocial worker) talks with them softly, respectfully. They feel relief to share their feeling with Apa. They (the Apas) say, Don't argue with your husband, you can share with us if you have any problem with your husband. You can tell us everything. We are here to listen to you"

COLLABORATION

Action contre la Faim (ACF), in partnership with University of Virginia (UVA), and the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHU).

DONOR

Health Evaluation and Applied Research Development (HEARD) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under cooperative agreement number AID-OAA-A-17-00002. The project team includes prime recipient, University Research Co., LLC (URC) and sub-recipient organizations

CONTACTS

- **Karine Le Roch:** MHPSS & Protection Research Project Coordinator, ACF HQ. kleroch@actioncontrelafaim.org
- **Sarah M. Murray, PhD, MSPH:** Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins University (USA). sarah.murray@jhu.edu
- **Amanda J. Nguyen, PhD, MA:** Assistant Professor, University of Virginia (USA). ajnguyen@virginia.edu
- **Shafir Rahaman,** Research Project Manager, ACF Bangladesh. mhcprspm-cox@bd-actionagainstthunger.org